

**Government of the District of Columbia  
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B**



**[DRAFT] RESOLUTION #4B-23-06XX  
Calling for Better Maintenance of National Park Service-Controlled  
DC Parks and Accountability to DC Residents  
Adopted June 26, 2023**

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B (Commission) takes note of the following:

- DC's park system integrates both federal parks, under the management of the National Park Service, and local parks under the management of the District Department of Parks and Recreation and other local government agencies. Particularly unique to DC is the significant share of parkland under National Park Service management: the federal agency operates over 6,500 acres of District parkland – nearly 90 percent of DC's park system. See District Department of Parks and Recreation, [Master Plan 2022](#). The National Park Service often limits implementation of universal access, full activation, and common urban park amenities for these spaces: for example, 54 percent of the National Park Services' properties in the District have no facilities at all – not even park benches. See George Washington University, Redstone Center, "[Neighborhood Park Service: Strategies to Create an Equitable and Activated Park System for the District of Columbia](#)" (May 2023).
- In addition to transfer of title to the land via Congressional legislation, the National Park Service has two primary mechanisms for shared use and management of national park land with the District government: Transfers of Jurisdiction and Cooperative Management Agreements. Transfers of Jurisdiction are the historic mechanism that allows the District to spend local dollars and manage federal parkland. This process is complex as it requires requires approval from the National Capital Planning Commission and DC Council. Cooperative Management Agreements are a newer and simpler mechanism that allow the DC government to invest in the capital needs and operation of federal parks. Unfortunately, there are incomplete and diverging records held by the National Park Service and the District government regarding ownership

and control of all parkland in the District, [“leading to inconsistencies in mapping and uncertainties regarding who has responsibility for what.”](#)

- The District Department of Parks and Recreation has expressed as part of its [Master Plan 2022](#) a goal of a unified and equitable park system. Part of attaining this goal, as recognized by the Department, is seeking partnerships to address amenity gaps and expand recreational opportunities. Some of the key recommendations contained in the Master Plan include “[p]ursu[ing] opportunities to acquire more parkland through [Transfers of Jurisdiction] or [Cooperative Management Agreements] with [the National Park Service]” and “[d]evelop[ing] clear standards and protocols to guide the District’s pursuit of additional [Transfers of Jurisdiction] or [Cooperative Management Agreements] with [the National Park Service].” The Master plan explicitly lists Fort Slocum, within the boundaries of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B, and Fort Totten, adjacent to Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B, as “[s]ites to assess and discuss with [the National Park Service] for further collaboration, based on neighborhood desire, need, and quality of site/amenity.”
- A recent report from George Washington University’s Redstone Center, [“Neighborhood Park Service: Strategies to Create an Equitable and Activated Park System for the District of Columbia,”](#) lays out the extensive problems in having a federal government agency that is best known for managing expansive tracts of wilderness and nature preserves also managing neighborhood parks in DC. Although DC was rated the best urban park system in the country in the latest [ParkScore ratings](#) from the nonprofit Trust for Public Land due to widespread availability of parks, the Redstone Center Report notes the National Park Service managed parks are “[i]nconsistently managed and inequitably maintained.”
- More specifically, the Redstone Center Report notes the following challenges:
  - The boundaries between National Park Service, District agency, other federal agency, and private parklands “are unclear, which creates jurisdictional confusion for policymakers and residents alike.... [T]here is no straightforward way to access information about jurisdictional boundaries.”
  - “[T]here is no current structure in place for regular coordination between [the National Park Service] and the District government regarding parks management. This lack of ongoing coordination results in many missed opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing. In the instances when [the National Park Service] and the District do coordinate, the process is burdensome and time consuming.”

- “[The National Park Service] is not positioned to be responsive to DC residents. Because [the National Park Service] does not proactively engage with the community, District residents find it difficult to communicate with NPS about issues they see in [National Park Service]-managed parks. [The National Park Service] has no centralized, user-friendly system for connecting with residents, and it is not integrated into the District’s 311 system for service requests. Lacking statehood, District residents do not elect representatives who oversee [the National Park Service]. The agency’s lack of engagement with and disconnect from local voters means that [the National Park Service] is not accountable to DC residents and elected officials.”
- The National Park Service has at least [\\$2 billion in deferred maintenance costs](#) at National Park Service properties in DC. As noted in the Redstone Center Report, “[t]he District of Columbia does not face the same funding constraints as [the National Park Service] and has demonstrated an interest in investing in greenspace, including through cooperative management agreements like Franklin Park and sustainability projects run through [the District Department of Energy and Environment],” although the District’s local budget is not without its own limitations.
- Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B either adjoins or contains several parks and properties that are administered by the National Park Service, most prominently Fort Slocum Park and Fort Totten Park, but also including the open spaces between Riggs Road and New Hampshire Avenue, NE. While the open spaces and recreational opportunities provided by these facilities are tremendous community assets, the Commission continues to have concerns regarding the National Park Service’s management of these areas, which is characterized by community disengagement and neglect.
- The process to request maintenance of National Park Service land is confusing, if it is even clear which land falls within the Park Service’s jurisdiction. Service requests for issues related to National Park Service land cannot be made through the District’s 311 for city services system. Nor does the National Park Service offer a clear mechanism to submit these requests, with unclear points of contact and a lack of transparency regarding existing maintenance requests. District agencies often end up providing the relevant maintenance in the end, even for National Park Service land, or residents or other agencies engage in self-help to provide minimum levels of maintenance.
- Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B has previously highlighted the multi-jurisdictional challenges associated with the management and maintenance of parkland in the District:
  - “These [parks administered by the National Park Service] have been the victim of neglect. While much loved by our community,

lack of regular maintenance and cleaning means that these parks are unable to reach [their] full potential as a community asset. Regular overgrowth, including that of invasive plants overtakes and damages the woodlands. Mowing is inconsistent in the summer and sidewalks adjacent to the parks are rarely shoveled in the winter. The parks regularly become[] a dumping ground and large amounts of trash have accumulated beyond the scope of volunteer community members to clean up.” [Letter](#) from Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B to National Park Service (Apr. 26, 2021).

- “Residents have repeatedly raised concerns about the lack of maintenance of the paper alley and the adjoining space [behind the 5400 block of 1st Street, NE], which is National Park Service land. It has become an unusable dumping ground, with the National Park Service and the District Department of Transportation pointing fingers at each other regarding maintenance. Residents have also noted the space could be well-maintained and serve the broader community, as it is a natural connection and throughway from Riggs Road, NE, to 1st Street, NE, and would benefit from a formal pathway, lighting, placemaking, and other amenities.” [Resolution 4B-22-0301](#), Calling on District Department of Transportation & National Park Service to Make Usable Paper Alley Behind 5400 Block of 1st Street, NE (Mar. 28, 2022).
- “Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B notes a number of sidewalk gaps around National Park Service land, including Fort Slocum. Specifically, the east side of the 5700 through 5800 blocks of 3rd Street, NW, and the north side of the 200 blocks of Madison Street, NW, are priority gaps because they are in a school area and provide access to parks and recreational facilities. See D.C. Code § 9-425.01(b). The Commission encourages coordination with the National Park Service to promptly address these sidewalk gaps.” [Resolution 4B-21-0701](#), Petitioning for Priority Sidewalk Installations within Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B (July 26, 2021).
- Other National Park Service properties in the area similarly suffer from a lack of community engagement in the planning process. Both the District Department of Transportation, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B, and area transportation experts and advocates have repeatedly said that National Park Service-owned land is the preferred choice for the construction of the Metropolitan Branch Trail between Fort Totten and Takoma; however, the National Park Service has slowed construction of this valuable community asset that will reactivate otherwise abandoned land. See [Resolution 4B-21-0206](#), Providing Feedback on the 65 Percent Design of the Metropolitan Branch Trail (Feb. 22, 2021);

[Resolution 4B-20-0702](#), Additional Recommendations on the Metropolitan Branch Trail (July 27, 2020).

- Advisory Neighborhood Commissions and residents deserve accessible and activated parks, whether they are owned and managed by the National Park Service or the District government. Ensuring access, maintenance, and use of our parkland requires transparency and coordination among the National Park Service and local agencies and likely requires a more active role by District government agencies in efforts to coordinate and manage these spaces.
- This Resolution, while focused on greater accountability from the National Park Service, recognizes jurisdictional confusion among District government agencies regarding locally-owned and managed parkland, including how to submit requests for maintenance and ensure equitable access to and maintenance of these spaces. As noted in the Redstone Center Report: “Even for recreational facilities, [the District Department of Parks and Recreation] does not control its own maintenance or maintenance budget. The majority of [the District Department of Parks and Recreation’s] budget, which comes from local tax revenue, permitting fees, and municipal bonds, is directed toward recreation program staff and long-term capital investments. Unlike most local parks and recreation agencies, [the District Department of Parks and Recreation] does not use its own operating funds to maintain its facilities. Instead, maintenance of [District Department of Parks and Recreation] facilities is managed by [the District Department of General Services]. Some [District Department of General Services] funds are dedicated to [District Department of Parks and Recreation] projects, but maintenance budgets are not allocated by site. When the public interacts with [District Department of Parks and Recreation] officials through programming or capital planning, these officials cannot act on resident requests for improved maintenance, but only pass along the requests to [the District Department of General Services]. [The District Department of General Services] officials, meanwhile, are not in contact with residents.” As Commissioners have experienced, District Department of General Services maintenance is piecemeal and sometimes of poor quality, particularly when dealing with the care of parklands that require more than mowing, in part due to haphazard integration into the 311 for city services platform and poor communication and collaboration with the District Department of Parks and Recreation.

**RESOLVED:**

- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the National Park Service and the District government to ensure all District parklands are accessible to residents and contain basic amenities that are crucial to the activation of public spaces within a city, including at a minimum trees, lighting, benches, and water fountains.

- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B supports the District Department of Parks and Recreation's interest in acquiring National Park Service land based on clear standards and protocols to address amenity gaps and expand recreational opportunities, as expressed in detail in the Department's [Master Plan 2022](#).
- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the National Park Service and the District government to coordinate in the creation of complete, public facing, and easily understandable information regarding which entity has jurisdiction over public parks in the District.
- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the District Department of Parks and Recreation to consider expanding its mission beyond "recreational programs, services and facilities" to include parks, to provide staff expressly dedicated to coordination with the National Park Service regarding the District's parkland, and to assess, in coordination with the District Department of General Services, the District's maintenance of its parks to ensure greater accountability to District residents.
- That Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B calls on the District's Office of Unified Communications, in coordination with the District Department of Parks and Recreation, the District Department of General Services, and any other relevant government agencies, to integrate National Park Service and District-owned park maintenance requests within the 311 city services system by including the National Park Service as a responding agency and further integrating the District Department of General Services.

**FURTHER RESOLVED:**

That the Commission designates Commissioner Erin Palmer, ANC 4B02, Commissioner Alison Brooks, ANC 4B08, Commissioner Evan Yeats, ANC 4B04, and Commissioner Kevin Gilligan, ANC 4B05, to represent the Commission in all matters relating to this Resolution.

**FURTHER RESOLVED:**

That, in the event the designated representative Commissioners cannot carry out their representative duties for any reason, the Commission authorizes the Chair to designate another Commissioner to represent the Commission in all matter relating to this Resolution.

**FURTHER RESOLVED:**

That, consistent with DC Code § 1-309, only actions of the full Commission voting in a properly noticed public meeting have standing and carry great weight. The actions, positions, and opinions of individual commissioners,

insofar as they may be contradictory to or otherwise inconsistent with the expressed position of the full Commission in a properly adopted resolution or letter, have no standing and cannot be considered as in any way associated with the Commission.

**ADOPTED** by voice vote at a regular public meeting (notice of which was properly given, and at which a quorum of \_ members was present) on June 26, 2023, by a vote of \_ yes, \_ no, \_ abstentions.

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